UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.96/846/Part V/1
18 July 1995

Original: ENGLISH

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Forty-sixth session

UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1994-1995 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1996

PART V. SOUTH WEST ASIA, NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Section 1 - Afghanistan

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.95-02243

V.1 AFGHANISTAN

1. Beneficiary population

1. At 31 December 1994, Afghanistan was host to a refugee population of 18,800 Tajiks, of whom 6,800 were located in Sakhi Camp outside Mazar-i-Sharif in Balkh province. In addition, an estimated 12,000 were living in scattered settlements in the northern provinces of Kunduz and Takhar. The figure reflects a decrease of 10,938 persons who repatriated with the assistance of UNHCR and some 8,000 who returned to Tajikistan spontaneously during the year. Seven mandate refugees, of Iranian and Iraqi origin, are assisted by UNHCR in Mazar-i-Sharif pending their repatriation or the identification of a resettlement country. UNHCR provided assistance to 226,000 internally displaced persons, of which 193,128 in Jalalabad, 27,280 in northern Afghanistan and 1,190 in Herat. An additional 106,500 displaced persons were being assisted in camps overseen by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance to Afghanistan (UNOCHA) with the assistance of other United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC).

2. Developments in 1994 and 1995

2. The outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan in late 1992 led to an influx of some 70,000 Tajik refugees into northern Afghanistan. A combination of organized and spontaneous repatriation during 1993 and 1994 resulted in a significant reduction in numbers. At the conclusion of the repatriation season in September 1994, UNHCR undertook a household census of the camp population which showed a reduction in the figures and accounted for repatriation to Tajikistan and internal relocation to other parts of Afghanistan. Negotiations between the Government in Dushanbe and the Tajik opposition have been sporadic and inconclusive. Amnesties, cease-fire agreements, assurances by Tajik government officials and the presence of UNHCR in Tajikistan have been positive factors influencing those who have decided to return.

3. As security conditions allowed, UNHCR international field staff undertook missions to the provinces of Kunduz and Takhar to monitor the condition of Tajik refugees throughout these areas. Arrangements were made for the transportation and distribution of 20,000 blankets and 3,000 plastic sheets to the refugees living in two settlements. However, periodic bombardments in the area by Afghan government and opposition forces, and the suspension of river travel due to seizure of the barge linking Afghanistan with Tajikistan limited UNHCR's access to the area.

4. An escalation of factional fighting in Kabul in January 1994 triggered the flight of tens of thousands of families throughout the year. Most of the displaced sought shelter in the eastern city of Jalalabad, where various United Nations agencies participated in a coordinated joint response. UNHCR assumed responsibility for the provision of relief items, registration and camp management. In October, camp management was turned over to UNOCHA. The improved security situation in Kabul since late March 1995 has initiated a cautious but steady return of displaced persons at the rate of 150 families per day throughout April and May. Land routes have been opened that allow shipments of some food and relief supplies

to reach the city. UNHCR maintains a permanent international staff presence in Kabul and plans to reopen the office during the year. The United Nations agencies that assist internally displaced persons in camps have begun a review of their assistance policies in light of the improved situation in Kabul.

3. 1996 country programmes

(a) Objectives

5. For Tajik refugees in Afghanistan, the Office of the UNHCR Chief of Mission, through its Sub-Office in Mazar-i-Sharif and in coordination with the Office of the Chief of Mission in Tajikistan, will continue to pursue opportunities for voluntary repatriation. In addition to organized transport, an assistance package that consists of a cash grant and a four-month food basket in cooperation with WFP is provided to returnees at the time of departure. Under the assumption of continued stability and maintenance of the security situation in Tajikistan, at the end of 1995, it is estimated that some 2,000 to 3,000 refugees will remain in Sakhi camp plus another 10,000 in Takhar and Kunduz provinces. However, initial movements during the spring months were well below expectations. It is foreseen that voluntary repatriation, both organized and spontaneous, of the balance of Tajik refugees in northern Afghanistan will be completed by the end of 1996.

6. For the residual caseload of Tajik refugees in Afghanistan, the Office of the UNHCR Chief of Mission will initiate a programme to facilitate local settlement in cooperation with Afghan authorities for those individuals and families who are unwilling or unable to return to Tajikistan. The programme for care and maintenance will conclude by the end of 1995 and will be replaced with projects to prepare Tajiks in Afghanistan for a self-sufficient and productive life in permanent settlements. Assistance with local settlement should be viewed in context with the concurrent programme to facilitate repatriation.

7. Assistance to internally displaced persons will be conducted within the framework of supporting repatriation to Afghanistan. Based on initiatives undertaken during 1995, it is anticipated that the security situation in Afghanistan will stabilize to the degree that future displacements are avoided and prospects for return to home communities are enhanced. Through an approach of assisting communities in Afghanistan, projects will be undertaken that benefit returning refugees as well as internally displaced persons, (the chapter on Afghanistan repatriation (A/AC.96/846, Part V/13) refers). Existing settlements for displaced persons will be turned over to resident communities with the cooperation of local Afghan authorities or, where necessary, continue under the overall coordination and management of UNOCHA.

(b) Proposed budgets for 1996

8. Assistance to Tajik refugees in 1996 will shift from care and maintenance to local settlement due to the expected repatriation of much of the caseload in 1995. It is expected however that a substantial number of refugees, some 2,000 to 3,000 at Sakhi and up to 10,000 in Kunduz and Takhar provinces, will express a clear desire, either for political or other reasons, to remain in Afghanistan.

Funds have been budgeted to provide for shelter material, shallow well construction and for the improvement of existing agricultural supply systems. Although most Tajik refugees are from agricultural backgrounds, some may be inclined to seek employment in the urban economy. Funds are therefore budgeted for training and income-generation projects to be provided through local NGOs. It is also foreseen that the building of schools and the purchase of classroom equipment and supplies will be supported.

9. UNHCR will continue to support organized and voluntary repatriation programmes for Tajik refugees in northern Afghanistan. Working out of the UNHCR Sub-Office Mazar-i-Sharif, organized transport by hired truck and by rail via Uzbekistan will be provided when possible and when the numbers of Tajiks repatriating permit. Simultaneously, transportation grants will be provided on a case-by-case basis to those wishing to repatriate by independent means via Sher Khan Bandar. It is expected that up to 6,000 persons will opt for these two means of assisted transport in 1996. Repatriation grants will also be provided. Based on the assumptions of continuing stability and the maintenance of security in Tajikistan, it is believed that the repatriation, both organized and spontaneous, of the balance of Tajik refugees in Afghanistan will be completed by the end of 1996. As and when necessary, funds will be requested from the General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation activities in 1996.

10. Assistance, in the form of medical expenses and a subsistence and living allowance pending the identification of durable solutions will be provided to foreign nationals in Afghanistan who have been recognized as Mandate refugees. Most of the individual cases are located in Mazar-i-Sharif. Upon approval for resettlement in a third country, departure expenses will be provided. A budget is proposed to assist up to 20 beneficiaries during 1996.

11. The UNHCR programme for repatriation and for assistance to the communities to which Afghan refugees are returning is described under the regional special programme for repatriation to Afghanistan.

(c) Implementing partners

12. Many of the activities will continue to be implemented and monitored directly by UNHCR field offices. For Tajik refugees and displaced persons in northern Afghanistan, NGOs will continue to provide programmes that address their specific needs in the fields of health, water, sanitation and social services, with particular attention being paid to women, children and vulnerable groups. There will be an increased emphasis on programmes that promote local integration and economic self-sufficiency for the local settlement of Tajik refugees who decide to remain in Afghanistan.

13. The allocation and coordination of all food assistance is handled by WFP. A mixed food package equivalent to four months of rations will be provided to returnees from Sakhi camp and from the provinces of Kunduz and Takhar at the time of departure. The package will include wheat, rice, chick-peas, sugar and oil. The availability of assistance in Sakhi camp will be reduced, and ultimately eliminated, as the measures for local settlement progress. It is anticipated that

a final food package equal in value to the repatriation grant will be provided to refugees opting for local settlement.

(d) Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(i) 1994 expenditure (all sources of funds)

14. The 1994 expenditures were higher than the revised estimates, mainly under common staff costs, because of higher than expected staff turnover and the evacuation of international staff from Mazar-i-Sharif to Hairaton due to deteriorating security. Furthermore, expenditure under travel was higher than expected and included a regional deployment of the international staff in Kandahar because of the improved security situation there and for an emergency response in Jalalabad for newly arrived displaced persons, mainly from Kabul.

(ii) Revised 1995 requirements (all sources of funds)

15. The revised 1995 requirements are higher than the initial estimates mainly because of the creation of three posts under the Afghan repatriation programme; one international Senior Protection Officer post in the Office of the Chief of Mission in Islamabad, one Senior Administrative Assistant post in Mazar-i-Sharif and one Driver post in Jalalabad. On the other hand one post of Senior Protection Clerk and one post of Driver were discontinued in the Office of the Chief of Mission. Additional provision has been made under travel in the programme of assistance to Tajik refugees in the north of Afghanistan. Requirements under general operating expenses are also higher because of the relocation of the UNHCR Branch Office from joint premises in Islamabad to a separate building elsewhere in the city. This relocation resulted in the need for security arrangements. Total requirements are also higher because of the need for acquiring of additional vehicles and replacing computers as well as office furniture and equipment for the new premises.

(iii) Initial 1996 requirements (all sources of funds)

16. The total of the initial 1996 requirements are slightly lower than the revised 1995 requirements. Salaries and common staff costs are at much the same level because of the extension of all previously approved time limited posts until 31 December 1996. Costs under travel are expected to be lower since all the UNHCR Field Offices in Afghanistan are fully staffed and will therefore require fewer redeployments of staff between the various offices in the country. Under general operating expenses, additional provision has been made for the re-establishment of the Office of the Chief of Mission in Kabul. Provision has also been made for the replacement of vehicles, the purchase of computer and telecommunications equipment as well as for miscellaneous furniture. Under joint United Nations activities, the costs for the charter and operation of a cost-shared aircraft for staff travel and for transportation of material will be covered under the Afghan Repatriation programme.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN AFGHANISTAN

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1994	1995		1996	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1994 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
3,965.0	–	–	EMERGENCY FUND	–
1,001.4	1,019.8	1,022.7	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	30.0
181.0 a/	–	353.0 b/	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	–
–	300.0	–	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	492.5
88.4	–	70.0 b/	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	–
5,235.8	1,319.8	1,445.7	SUB–TOTAL OPERATIONS	522.5
5,235.8	**1,319.8**	**1,445.7**	**TOTAL (1)**	**522.5**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
2,335.0	5,801.5	12,604.7	AFGHANISTAN REPATRIATION PROGRAMME	5,109.7 c/
3,101.2	3,002.6	3,362.3	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Overview Tables (Part II)	3,052.2
186.2	226.2	373.9	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Overview Tables (Part II)	357.2
61.1	–	–	OTHER TRUST FUNDS	–
5,683.5	**9,030.3**	**16,340.9**	**TOTAL (2)**	**8,519.1**
10,919.3	**10,350.1**	**17,786.6**	**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**9,041.6**

a/ obligation incurred under the General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation

b/ allocated from the General Allocation for Voluntary Repatriation

c/ Subject to revision for the Consolidated Inter–Agency Appeal for Emergency Humanitarian Assistance for Afghanistan (October 1995 – September 1996)